

# THE ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

FORMERLY "THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT"  
OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE A.A.L.

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# THE ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

Official Journal of the Association of Assistant Librarians

(Section of the Library Association)

Edited by W. G. Smith, Finsbury Public Libraries.

VOL. 49. NO. 1

JANUARY, 1956

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## OFFICERS OF THE A.A.L., 1956.

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## EDITORIAL

BOURNEMOUTH'S attractions, according to its publicity booklet, include the free use by visitors of its public library. We decided to test this out and presented ourselves at the lending library counter with a request to join for our fortnight's holiday. This, however, was not to be the easy, carefree matter that might have been expected from the publicity officer's invitation; rules reared against us and bureaucracy blocked the path to the books. "Have you brought your library tickets from home?" we were asked. We did not point out that Bournemouth's publicity had failed to mention this but meekly accepted a form to be completed by ourselves and our hotel proprietor. Retiring to our hotel with form, but without books, we found that the proprietor was expected to signify that we were responsible people fit to borrow books. How he was to assess this was not clear since we had just arrived and had not yet had time to pinch the silver or the maid, abscond with the bill unpaid, or eat peas from a knife. However, signing forms was accepted as just another chore of hotel-keeping, and we embarked on our second trip to the library.

Finally accepted as readers, we were issued with one general ticket and, on request, one for non-fiction only. This mingy supply would have meant a daily trek to the library for fresh supplies had we not taken the easy way out by buying a load of second-hand books from Boots. These tickets were valid for two years. Bournemouth's statistics show that 46 per cent of the population is registered as readers but we wonder what proportion of this consists of holiday-makers who wanted the service for a fortnight only.

In an article in this issue, Mr. Stradling pleads for greater inter-availability of tickets. While this would be useful, holiday towns should surely admit visitors to temporary membership irrespective of whether they bring their home tickets. Having gone this far, as at Bournemouth, ridiculous restrictions such as getting a ratepayer's signature should be abolished. Why not, instead, charge a deposit as is done at Southport? Few would resent this if it saves having to make a second visit to the library before getting books and it is done by the commercial libraries.

Having enrolled the holidaymaker, give him a reasonable number of tickets—three or four general.

Finally, do not give such a poor opinion of the public library service as is done at Bournemouth with a notice indicating that fiction may not be reserved at all while non-fiction may be reserved only when it is six months old!

## A.A.L. CORRESPONDENCE COURSES

### Revision Courses, March-June, 1956

A limited number of *Registration* and *Final* courses will be available to run from March to June. These short period courses are reserved exclusively for those students who have already sat the examination in the subjects required.

The closing date for application is 20th February, but forms for Final revision courses will be accepted up to one week after publication of the winter examinations results if this is later than 20th February. After these dates no application will be considered.

### Full Length Courses

Applications for First Professional Examination, Registration, and Final courses beginning spring 1956, must be completed and returned by 28th February. Full particulars of the courses offered are given in the current

edition of the *Students' Handbook*. (L.A. 3s. 6d., post free).

### Forms, Fees and Enquiries

Forms may be obtained from the A.A.L. Hon. Education and Sales Officer, Mr. J. S. Davey, F.L.A., 49, Halstead Gardens, London, N.21, who will be pleased to answer any enquiries concerning the courses. Stamped addressed envelopes for replies would be appreciated. The fee for each course is £2 7s. 6d., plus 10s. extra to students in Africa, America, Asia and Australasia.

### Panel of Tutors

Enquiries are invited from Fellows who are interested in becoming tutors. A reserve file of tutors in all subjects is being built up in order to meet the increasing demand for courses. Full details may be obtained from Mr. Davey at the above address.

# CORRESPONDENCE

## L.A. MOTION.

How unkind of your predecessor to publish, in the same issue as that impassioned defence of small town councillors by a Deputy Librarian, those extracts from the *Newark Advertiser*. I suggest that you should encourage assistants to send you cuttings of this sort: they tell us far more about the present state of libraries in this country than twenty learned articles would.

The debate on the merits of the L.A. proposals has exposed a highly significant fact—that not only local authorities, but also some senior librarians, are in favour of the preponderant influence of those authorities in the Association. More than one chief librarian has expressed dis-

approval that we should have presumed to adopt a motion displeasing to the local authority associations.

Professions are usually jealous of their independence, but many of us love our chains. Until we become like other professions, nobody will ever think of us as one, and we shall go on being undergraded and underpaid compared with the others. (In the *Municipal Journal* of 18th November, well over 50 per cent of the two hundred local government posts advertised were *above APT II*; what proportion of librarians—what proportion even of chartered librarians—are on *APT III* and *above*?). And no wonder that special librarians complain that the L.A. does not give their point of view adequate recognition, when prominent members want it to have

no idea that has not first been cleared with the Association of Municipal Corporations.

Can one imagine reading in a newspaper, "Newark Corporation is considering withdrawing from the Royal Institute of British Architects."? But it is possible to talk seriously about the L.A. in those terms. It would be interesting to know who would be expected to join the new

Association: merely local authorities with rateable values under £300,000? Or would the intimidation which is apparently practised on chief librarians at the A.G.M.—again, would not every other profession in the land blow the roof off about that?—be extended to make the staff of such authorities join the new organization?

EDWIN CHAPMAN,  
*Assistant, Battersea P.L.*

### A NEW YEAR MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

In my native North Country any New Year's Day is an event, but this one will be, to me, especially so. I welcome the opportunity to extend to all my colleagues the traditional wishes of a happy and prosperous New Year. To put happiness before prosperity is, in our profession, wise and philosophical.

The year which lies before us will be an important one for all librarians: the Southport Annual General Meeting appeared to divide the parent Association. Actually it did no more than reveal a crack in the structure, caused, as cracks are, by inadequate foundations. Simultaneously, moves for the creation of new sections and a greater awareness of their importance among existing parts have given the appearance of uneasiness. Actually the Library Association has been presented with an opportunity to examine the essentials, and it is our duty in Council, Branch and Section to work together for the creation of a happy Association, having stronger parts, with a unity of purpose. It is our especial responsibility as the largest and all pervading Section to play our part. I will not say our undoubted part, although this political *cliché* sprang to mind, because we have yet to convince some who doubt.

I have only one wish—to see even greater activity, a higher percentage of voters, larger attendances and livelier meetings. The A.A.L. has a reputation for forthrightness in the expression of its opinions and for being in the van of progress. To maintain that reputation we must be careful never to agree or disagree without reason: to shun apathy in thought.

There remains the opportunity for those who can to render service to the A.A.L. as committee members, correspondence course tutors, and active and vocal attenders at professional meetings—giving benefit, we hope, to those who, in their turn, will take our places on some future New Year's Day.

W. TYNEMOUTH.

## OFF THE FENCE

(COUNCIL NOTES: NOVEMBER 3).

FOR THE PRE-GUY FAWKES meeting a large-scale invasion of student observers from the North-Western Polytechnic School of Librarianship swelled the numbers in the Council Chamber to 61. A packed house in another sphere of politics is usually indicative of an agenda providing fireworks. No exception this, and perhaps the loudest bang was expected from the item dealing with the much publicized proposal that a Municipal Libraries Section be formed. The blue paper (or Hon. Secretary's memorandum on the topic) had been smouldering since May, but Council had remained until now firmly astride the fence, showing no great inclination either to retreat or to advance and investigate.

Consideration of the memorandum, which reported a Spring meeting with representatives of other Sections who were unanimous in their approval of the proposed new section, led to a prolonged and sometimes confused debate. A roll-call of Divisional views revealed a fairly even partition of opinion, and a desire in some directions for a marriage between the new baby and the County Libraries Section. The young Mr. McColvin became impatient and tried to rush a decision, but was rebuked by the President for this "family failing." As remarks from the Chair are wont to do, this one rebounded, the President being politely informed that this was perhaps a failing we should do well to emulate on this occasion.

Procedural hurdles finally cleared, Council proceed to agree (by no means unanimously) the proposals put forward by their representatives, who now will meet the other sections armed with a decision in favour of a Municipal Libraries Section and several riders concerning the Branch structure and the security of present Sections.

Earlier in the proceedings this debate had nearly foundered in deeper waters. A recommendation had come from the previous night's Policy Committee that the Council should support the formation of a Municipal Libraries Section open to chartered librarians only. The Divisions are being asked to see the old year out with this one, and it is likely that the New Year will bring resolutions to disturb the comparative calm of January routine.

One of these routine agenda items on this occasion raised the curtain on a storm of controversy. The reports of our representatives on the Council and committees of the Library Association brought forth two rebukes to the parent body. The L.A.'s decision to remove the one year's approved service barrier to the examinations met with ill-favour, and a motion is to be forwarded asking that candidates should have nine months' experience in an approved library before submitting themselves to the examiner's blue pencil. Some concern was also felt over the L.A.'s apparent lack of interest when consulted by a Town Clerk on the question of "the prostitution of the classics" in comic strip form. The phrase was Mr. Carver's, and he defended it against some criticism as the kind of language that people who do this sort of thing understand. Our motion to the Library Association seeks to impress upon them that literature and its treatment is not altogether outside their purview.

To resort to chronology, Council followed consideration of the minutes and matters arising by appointing its representatives on the L.A. Council and committees for 1956. The President and Honorary Secretary will serve, as is customary, on the L.A. Council, Mr. Tomlinson continues his able service as Education Committee representative, while Mr. Surridge on the Membership Committee and Mr. W. G. Smith on Publications, will have their first excursion in this higher sphere.

The reports of Standing Committees were subject to more amendment



than usual. Press and Publications were asked to prepare, in consultation with the author, a note on recent developments in Scottish library law for insertion in the *Summary of Public Library Law*, and their reluctance to print Council's Standing Orders has been finally overcome. The model introduction to the public library service, asked for by the last A.A.L. Conference, is not to be proceeded with. Two items from the Education Committee are to be referred to Divisions for consideration. A list of professional periodicals which should be available to students has been drawn up by the Greater London Division Committee. Provincial opinion on this is now sought, together with a proposal that Divisional textbook libraries should be set up.

The Conference Committee reported that the November *Assistant's* promise of blissful days at Girton College, Cambridge, is not to be fulfilled. A long road—via Southampton—has now taken the Conference to Norwich. As the Honorary Assistant Secretary said with obvious feeling, of the original arrangements only the date and the subject remain. Part of the Policy Committee's decisions have already been reported. They have made progress with a draft policy for the Association, and have set up a Policy and Action Committee for a purpose which would seem to be apparent from its name. The Finance and General Purposes Committee was more peaceably received, despite Mr. Phillips' aggressive assertion of his naivety in financial matters. Divisions are to be given a little more money, but despite this Council decided later in the agenda against asking the Library Association for increased capitation.

Mr. Tynemouth at last managed to squeeze in his report on the state of the voluminous back files of the Association's correspondence, and sought permission to do some healthy "weeding." Mr. Muris, with archivistic fervour, denounced this as heresy and treason, and fought for preservation of every jot and tittle. Mr. Tomlinson thought that librarians should be encouraged to throw more away, and was backed by Mr. Carver, who pointed out that November 5th was not far away.

The President reported on the successful A.A.L. Session at Southport, and Mr. Jones was thanked for his well-written and well-delivered paper. Miss Harrop, of the Manchester Division, also incurred the Council's gratitude for her sterling work on the publications stand, which was successful to the tune of £50 worth of sales and orders.

With thanks to the President for his services this year, and to the retiring officers, Mr. Hudson (Honorary Treasurer) and Mr. Jones (Honorary Editor), the Council ended on a pleasant and non-controversial note at a few minutes before six o'clock. Late enough, but earlier than the talk of all-night sessions had led one to hope for.

ERIC MOON.

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## ELECTION OF NATIONAL COUNCILLORS FOR 1956

We, being appointed scrutineers for the above election, declare the following to be the result of the poll after a recount:—

Elected.	No. of Votes.
1. Phillips, W. H. ...	1,266
2. Jones, A. C. ...	1,122
3. Tomlinson, O. S. ...	1,018
4. Carver, A. II. ...	996
5. McColvin, K. R. ...	899
6. Enser, A. G. S. ...	888
Not Elected.	No. of Votes.
7. Klieneberger, H. R. ...	884
8. Smith, H. ...	842
9. Edwards, G. E. C. ...	701
10. Hudson, W. S. ...	673
11. Sleightholm, M. T. ...	660
Total voting papers returned	2,053
Invalid voting papers	75
Valid voting papers counted	1,978
(Signed) W. TYNEMOUTH.	

*Presiding Officer.*

### *Scrutineers.*

R. Muris.	P. W. Bell.
A. F. Thompson.	T. Mann.
R. S. Mallaburn.	M. Corry.
T. S. Cardy.	Julie Milburn.

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## FINANCIAL RUIN

J. R. DEAN, *Rowley Regis P.L.*

A NEWCOMER to the library profession might well be forgiven if, after studying the professional journals, he came to the conclusion that librarians as a body considered the discussion of salaries and salary negotiations as beneath their dignity. One assumes that this is not the case, but if some librarians do feel this way, let them remember that nowadays, the salaries commanded by a profession determine its status in the eyes of the public. It is freely admitted that the salaries and the status of librarians and all local government employees are not all that could be desired, but what is being done about it?

We must first of all realise that a local authority will only do what it is forced to do—no more, and if possible, even less. While private firms have amenities to attract and keep workers, local authorities realise that between them they have what tends to become a monopoly, since the type of work carried out by a local government officer is very often of little value for an outside post. The only difference is that the "price ring" is not used to keep prices up, but rather to keep salaries down. The National Joint Council could well dispense with the word "Joint", since the employers' side tends to regard its main function as fighting against any proposal which would be likely to add a penny to the rates.

All stalemates—the normal ending, especially where librarians are concerned—are in effect victories for the employers, since postponement saves them money. Perhaps there would not be so many postponements if the Civil Service idea of back-dating salary awards was adopted. Even when employees are given an award, there seems to be no certainty that they will get it. There is a growing tendency for a number of authorities to refuse to implement these awards, making officers wait more than a year in many cases. An amalgamation of such authorities has even been formed to fight such awards.

These points show the difficulty of a local government officer getting a salary commensurate with his qualifications and responsibility. But what of the library staff?

To commence with, there is no compulsion for an authority to give an APT scale salary to a chartered librarian unless he is in charge of a branch library. This is stated in para. 22 of the N.J.C. Scheme of conditions of service, which goes on to state "supervising a staff of three or more other whole-time officers or the equivalent—APT 2." This is capable of different interpretations. The normal attitude of authorities seems to be that a senior assistant or a similar officer in a Central Library, although in charge of three or more staff, is not entitled to this salary since the Chief or Deputy is there to supervise.

Why are the responsibilities of authorities limited to the points stated in para. 21? What is the Library Association doing? The attitude appears to be—make the qualification standards higher, and the salaries offered will rise with them. This may be true in the field of private enterprise, where the main intention is to secure the best man for the post, but not in local government where the prevailing idea is to run a service with as little cost to the rates as possible, disregarding the quality of the service offered.

What have we got so far? Assistants in libraries are still on the General Division scale, with no financial return for working awkward hours. These same assistants have no reward for passing the L.A. entrance examination or even parts of the registration examination. The salary of chartered librarians seems to be irrevocably linked with an APT I salary. Examples of this may be seen in the *Times Literary Supplement*, where some weeks there is not a single post advertised above this salary.

What can be done about this? First of all librarians should realise that they will get nothing done by sitting still and saying nothing. When reports on negotiations are read at meetings, they should be discussed and resolutions showing the feeling of the members present should be passed and forwarded to the people or organisations concerned. At one recent meeting a report was taken as read and passed over without a single member knowing what it contained. This is surely apathy. Chief Librarians should do everything possible to get their committees to review bad salary scales within their library systems.

The Library Association has a large part to play. It should blacklist more appointments and take action against members applying for them. Scales for specific posts in different population areas should be drawn up, and action taken to implement them as soon as possible. Unless this is done, we shall get a replica of the situation existing over Chief Librarians' salaries which have still not been approved although they were drawn up more than three years ago.

NALGO should persevere with its claims for higher salaries. What arguments can the employers use when recent posts advertised for *clerks* in the Civil Service have a maximum salary higher than that obtainable in local government even with the intermediate examination of a professional

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body. Surely salaries and conditions in local government should be similar, if not linked, to those appertaining in the Civil Service. This would include the back-dating of awards.

Finally, what can the employers do? They should realise that economy is not always achieved by spending less money. This often becomes false economy. True economy is obtained by spending the money available wisely, and obtaining good value for it.

Only if all the above people work together, shall we get the salaries we deserve, and there will be no need for the statement in a national magazine that "to marry a Local Government Officer spells financial ruin!"

## READERS ON HOLIDAY

By BERNARD STRADLING, *Ilfracombe Branch, Devon Co.L.*

"HEY-HO, off for the holidays,—and let's make sure we have our library tickets!" I suspect that something like this is being said in an increasing number of homes each year, for the idea of inter-availability of library tickets is "catching on." Last year, almost seven hundred visitors to Ilfracombe borrowed books from the County Branch Library. Of these, about a half have produced their home library tickets, thus freeing themselves from any further formality.

There is perhaps one aspect of inter-availability that was not foreseen by the early protagonists of the scheme. This is that readers coming into a new library, after being used to one building or system, are making comparisons with—and not always favourable to—the libraries of their home towns. The visiting readers at Ilfracombe this summer have come from all parts of the British Isles. They have also come from all types of libraries, and it has been of great interest to hear the comments that some of them have made about their home libraries and about the Ilfracombe Branch.

While it has been interesting, it has also been an eye-opener to the petty restrictions which are still in force in some public libraries. It seems that there are still many libraries where books may not be changed on the day of issue. Other libraries do not allow readers to have books until the day following that on which they present their application forms. One lady from a large town in the Midlands assured me that her local library would not allow adults to borrow books from the children's department although for years she had dearly wished to re-read *Alice in Wonderland*. Some readers have lamented that their home libraries are in dark, gloomy buildings; others that many of their books are in a dirty condition. As one elderly gentleman said to me in a surprised tone, "All the books in this library are clean!"

The criticisms made of the Ilfracombe Branch I will gloss over! On the credit side a surprisingly large number of visitors have expressed their pleasure at the sight of a vase of flowers in the library. Many others have expressed their appreciation for the service and civility they have received. We have always tried to show the reader that, in the words of S. C. Holliday, "he is among friends." Can it be that in some libraries these simple courtesies are not observed?

What sort of books do readers choose when on holiday? Many simply want something "light" to read on the beach, and generally the books are returned with a generous sprinkling of sand between the leaves. A certain number take advantage of their two weeks' break to read philosophy or history. One afternoon I even came across a reader,

book in hand, striding across the Downs overlooking the sea and declaiming from Byron, "Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean—roll."

Students taking a working holiday at the larger hotels sometimes require books appertaining to their studies. Then, too, there are the readers interested in the fauna and flora, ornithology or marine life of the district. Others require information about local earthworks and prehistoric remains. Guide books of the area are also greatly in demand.

It has often been said that the general public is completely apathetic in its attitude towards the work of Public Libraries. Unfortunately, in most areas this is probably quite true. However, after speaking with many visitors this summer it is my opinion that a certain minority of the public is very keenly concerned with our activities. This interest is being deepened by their holiday visits to new libraries. For this reason alone the inter-availability of tickets seems to me to be well worth-while. In helping to create library-minded citizens it has a potential value that possibly few of us have realised.

The November, 1952, issue of the *Assistant* contained an article by Mr. J. R. Pike, Deputy Borough Librarian of Torquay, on rather similar lines to the present one. Mr. Pike urged the need for a national co-ordinated scheme allowing full inter-availability of tickets. Three more years have gone by and there has still been no general agreement.

Though no accurate figures are available, it is still true that many library authorities do not grant inter-availability. Is it too much to ask that they should reconsider their decision?

## L'HEURE JOYEUSE

By ANNE W. STRUTHERS

WHEN I READ Paul Hazard's description of L'Heure Joyeuse in *Books, Children and Men*, five years ago, I resolved to visit this famous children's library the first time I returned to Paris. Last summer I realised my ambition of visiting it.

L'Heure Joyeuse is the "Bibliotheque municipale de la Ville de Paris," and was presented by the Book Committee of Children's Libraries of New York in 1924. Although it may now seem almost old-fashioned in appearance beside some of the latest children's libraries, it is still a model children's library in respect of its collection of books and in its administration.

I found my way to L'Heure Joyeuse one afternoon and after a few words with Mademoiselle Gruny, the librarian, I was left to explore.

The first thing that caught my attention was a gay notice board which gives all the details of how to join; when the library is open and what can be borrowed. I was interested to see that "Inscriptions" only take place on Thursdays at 2.30 p.m., and to see that new readers over eight years of age are given a two-hour introduction to the library. Readers under eight years of age are given a half-hour introduction to the library. I was considerably impressed at the thought of a two-hour introduction to the library, because I doubt if many of the children I have worked with could concentrate for such long introductions to their respective libraries.

In addition to choosing books to borrow from the library, readers are allowed to consult reference books, to read and to do homework in the library. Readers are allowed to borrow four books at a time: one of the reader's own choice; one non-fiction; one piece of music and one foreign book. The provision of tickets for music and for foreign books seems a good plan.

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During the holiday period readers can borrow as many as ten books at a time: five of the reader's own choice; one non-fiction; two pieces of music and two foreign books. This is a necessary service of the library, because so many of the children leave Paris for the summer.

Books are normally issued for a period of fifteen days, and are always covered with brown paper when issued. These covers must help to lengthen the usually short lives of children's books.

The next matter that interested me was the classification of the books. They are in four main groups: R—Fiction; C—Tales; I—Picture books; Non-fiction.

The non-fiction is classed by the Dewey Decimal Classification, with the addition of four classes: B—Biography; G—Large books; P—Bound periodicals; and books in foreign languages (al.—German, an.—English, es.—Spanish, it.—Italian).

The arrangement of the books is similar to that in most children's libraries with the important addition of special class marks for foreign books. The provision of extra tickets and of special class marks for foreign books gives some idea of the importance of this collection.

The catalogue is one of the most detailed catalogues of children's books that I have seen. It is in card form with sections under authors, titles, subjects, illustrators and series. The main entry gives author, title, place of publication, illustrations and series. Each main entry is annotated and I was most interested to hear that the librarian and her staff read all the books that come into the library. This means that there is now a collection of about seven thousand accounts of books read. This seems an excellent plan, but would be out of the question for most children's librarians. The readers have access to the catalogue and beside it are very clear explanations of both the classification and the catalogue.

On a hasty tour round the shelves I kept seeing English and American friends in French guise: *Les Quatre Soeurs Marsch*; *Nous ne Voulons pas Aller au Mer*; *Les Enfants de Bambi*; *L'Île au Trésor*; *La petite Rebecca du Ruisseau ensoleillé*; *Sambo, le petit Nègre*, etc.

It was interested in the collection of periodicals. There are periodicals for amusement such as *Roudoudou*: a magazine for very young children; and *La Semaine de Suzette*: a magazine for girls. There are also instructive periodicals such as *Science et Vie*; *Naturalia* and *Geographia*. In addition to current copies of about eleven periodicals, bound volumes of back numbers are available.

The extension activities of L'Heure Joyeuse include story hours, plays, exhibitions and even conjuring shows and parties.

The exhibitions are prepared by interested readers who are invited to meet in the library at certain times to prepare them. This seems a good idea and the results are of a very high standard. When I visited L'Heure Joyeuse there was an exhibition devoted to Jules Verne. It included first editions of his work, later editions, large reproductions of illustrations to his work, and articles and documents about him. The main contribution of readers was a series of illustrated accounts of each of Jules Verne's books. These accounts were written and illustrated on thin yellow cardboard, and placed alongside the first editions which are bound in red cloth heavily tooled in gold.

The important thing that was missing from L'Heure Joyeuse was children. This was because I visited the library during the holiday period. I shall always remember two readers I did see: two sunburned brothers in bright red shirts and fawn shorts, who shook hands with Mademoiselle Gruny and chatted to her before choosing their books.



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